THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Date of Notice: July 25, 2006
PUBLIC NOTICE OF A
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
JO: 119733

The City of San Diego Land Development Review Division has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Report for the following project and is inviting your comments regarding the adequacy of the document. **Your comments must be received by September 7, 2006, to be included in the final document considered by the decision-making authorities.** Please send your written comments to the following address: **Donna Clark, Environmental Planner, City of San Diego Development Services Center, 1222 First Avenue, MS 501, San Diego, CA 92101 or e-mail your comments to DSDEAS@sandiego.gov .**

General Project Information:

- Project No. 2982, SCH No. 1999071104
- Community Plan Area: North City Future Urbanizing Area/Fairbanks Country Club Specific Plan
- Council District: 1

SUBJECT: EL CAMINO REAL ROAD/BRIDGE WIDENING PROJECT. COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT/SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT to widen El Camino Real between San Dieguito Road and Via de la Valle, replace the existing bridge over San Dieguito River, and to widen Via de la Valle between El Camino Real and El Camino Real North. The proposed project is located within the Coastal Zone, North City Future Urbanizing Area, and Fairbanks Country Club Specific Plan. Applicant: City of San Diego Engineering and Capital Projects Department.

Applicant: City of San Diego Engineering and Capital Projects Department

Recommended Finding: The draft Environmental Impact Report concludes that the project would result in significant environmental impacts in the following areas: traffic/circulation and visual/aesthetics.

Availability in Alternative Format: To request this Notice, the draft Environmental Impact Report and/or supporting documents in alternative format, call the Development Services Department at 619 446-5460 or (800) 735-2929 (TEXT TELEPHONE).

Additional Information: For environmental review information, contact Donna Clark at (619) 446-5387. For information regarding public meetings/hearings on this project, contact John Fisher at (619) 446-5231. The draft Environmental Impact Report and supporting documents may be reviewed, or purchased for the cost of reproduction ($155 for hard copy, $5 for CD-ROM), at the Fifth floor of the Development Services Center. This notice was published in the SAN DIEGO DAILY TRANSCRIPT, placed on the City of San Diego web-site (http://clerkdoc.sannet.gov/Website/publicnotice/pubicnoticeqa.html), and distributed on July 25, 2006.

Robert J. Manis, Assistant Deputy Director
Development Services Department

City of San Diego
Development Services

Land Development
Review Division
(619) 446-5460

Environmental Impact Report

Project No. 2982
SCH No. 1999071104

SUBJECT: EL CAMINO REAL ROAD/BRIDGE WIDENING PROJECT. COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT/SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT to widen El Camino Real between San Dieguito Road and Via de la Valle, replace the existing bridge over San Dieguito River, and to widen Via de la Valle between El Camino Real and El Camino Real North. The proposed project is located within the Coastal Zone, North City Future Urbanizing Area, and Fairbanks Country Club Specific Plan. Applicant: City of San Diego Engineering and Capital Projects Department.

This document has been completed by the City of San Diego's Environmental Analysis Section under the direction of the Director of Development Services Department and is based on independent analysis and determinations made pursuant to the San Diego Municipal Code Section 128.0103(a) and (b).

CONCLUSIONS:

The proposed project is a Process 5 City Council decision to widen El Camino Real between San Dieguito Road and Via de la Valle, replace the existing bridge over San Dieguito Road, and widen Via de la Valle between El Camino Real and El Camino Real North.

El Camino Real between San Dieguito Road and Via de la Valle is classified as a two-lane collector road approximately 2,400 feet long and 23 feet wide with no shoulders, bicycle lanes, or pedestrian walkways. The existing bridge is 340 feet long and 27 feet wide. This segment of El Camino Real is subject to severe congestion during peak travel times and currently operates at Level of Service (LOS) F at peak hours. In this location, El Camino Real would be inundated during a 100-year flood at several low points north of the river. Although the bridge surface would not be inundated, the 100-year flood level would rise to the bottom of the bridge deck without adequate room to allow debris to pass under the bridge. In addition, the bridge is not structurally adequate for the local seismic conditions due to the piles being relatively shallow and buried in sediments that could fail in an earthquake due to liquefaction.

The proposed project would raise El Camino Real above the 100-year flood level and replace the existing bridge with a higher, wider bridge with deeper piles. Approximately 1,000 feet of Via de la Valle would be widened to the south to accommodate new turn lanes from El Camino Real and a new, larger drainage ditch would be constructed along the southern edge of Via de la Valle.

Six build alternatives are analyzed at an equal level of detail in this EIR. This was done because federal funding was requested from and has been obligated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for improvements to the bridge through the Highway Bridge Program (HBP). The federal funding is estimated to be approximately $19 million. Therefore, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) must be satisfied, as well as CEQA. A separate Environmental Assessment (EA) that meets the guidelines of FHWA is being prepared to satisfy NEPA. It should be noted that two alternatives analyzed in this EIR are not considered viable by FHWA and would not be funded by the HBP. These are the Road Capacity Alternative and the Bicycle Safety Alternative. FHWA does not consider these alternatives viable because they do not provide all features needed to completely meet the purpose and need. Because these alternatives would attain most of the basic objectives of the project, they were included in the detailed analysis of the EIR. But if either of these alternatives were selected, funding for the bridge, independent of the proposed federal funding, would have to be obtained by the City.

Each alternative for widening El Camino Real would have one of two basic cross section designs: a full widened roadway or a narrow roadway. The different cross sections would provide different features in terms of number of vehicle travel lanes, bicycle lanes, center median, and pedestrian walkways. The full widened roadway cross section for El Camino Real would be a total of 122 feet wide and would include a total of four travel lanes (two in each direction), a 14-foot wide central median, a bicycle lane, and a 22-foot wide parkway with a pedestrian walkway on each side. The El Camino Real narrow roadway cross section would be 60 feet wide and would include either four travel lanes (two in each direction) with a two-foot wide striped median or two travel lanes (one in each direction) and bicycle lanes on each side with a 14-foot wide median. The build alternatives represent different horizontal locations which were varied in relation to the existing alignment of El Camino Real to address different issues. In addition to the six build alternatives, a No Build Alternative was also analyzed.

Central Alignment Alternative

This alternative would have a full widened roadway cross section roughly centered on the existing alignment of El Camino Real to impact neighboring properties on the east and west sides relatively equally. For this alternative, the roadway would be raised above the 100-year flood level on an embankment.

Road Capacity Alternative

This alternative would have a narrow roadway cross section with an alignment shifted west to avoid impacts to the wetlands in the drainage ditch parallel to the eastern edge of El Camino Real. For this alternative, the roadway would be raised above the 100-year flood level on retaining walls to keep the road width as narrow as possible.

Bicycle Safety Alternative

This alternative would have a narrow roadway cross section with an alignment shifted west to avoid impacts to the wetlands in the drainage ditch parallel to the eastern edge of El Camino Real. For this alternative, the roadway would be raised above the 100-year flood level on retaining walls to keep the road width as narrow as possible.

Western Alignment Alternative

This alternative would have a full widened roadway cross section with an alignment shifted west to avoid impacts to the wetlands in the drainage ditch parallel to the eastern edge of El Camino Real. For this alternative, the roadway would be raised above the 100-year flood level on an embankment.

Eastern Alignment Alternative

This alternative would have a full widened roadway cross section with an alignment shifted east to allow independent construction of the new bridge, minimize impacts to the developed properties along the western side of El Camino Real (Horsepark and Mary's Tack and Feed), and reduce impacts to wetlands in the drainage ditch parallel to the eastern edge of El Camino Real. The alignment for this alternative would be shifted eastward and would intersect with Via de la Valle at De la Valle Place. For this alternative, the roadway would be raised above the 100-year flood level on an embankment.

Lower Elevation Alternative

This alternative would have a full widened roadway cross section roughly centered on the existing alignment of El Camino Real to impact neighboring properties on the east and west sides relatively equally. The elevation (profile) of this alternative would be lower than for the other alternatives. For this alternative, the roadway would be raised above the 100-year flood level on an embankment.

No Build Alternative

This alternative represents the circumstance under which the El Camino Real Road/Bridge Project widening the segment of El Camino Real from Via de la Valle to San Dieguito Road and replacing the existing bridge over San Dieguito River does not proceed.

Preferred Alternative

The Eastern Alignment Alternative has been identified as the Preferred Alternative. This alternative allows the bridge and the roadway for El Camino Real north of the bridge to be constructed completely free of the existing bridge and roadway. The Eastern Alignment Alternative would therefore, avoid lengthy disruption of traffic during construction. The bridge could be built in one phase, requiring fewer piers and therefore, would affect the river for a shorter duration than the other alternatives. In addition, this alternative would also allow the existing bridge to be retained and provide the potential for a non-vehicular trail to improve multi-use recreational access to coastal resources. The Eastern Alignment Alternative would generate the least impacts to properties developed with structures along the west side of El Camino Real. This alternative would generate intersection benefits by moving the major intersection of El Camino Real and Via de la Valle to the east, lining up with De la Valle Place on the north leg instead of a commercial driveway as under existing conditions. The Eastern Alignment Alternative would thus provide more regulated turn movements and would place the intersection of El Camino Real and Via de la Valle in a location that is less constrained by existing buildings along the southern edge of Via de la Valle and by steep slopes on the northern edge of Via de la Valle.

All of the build alternatives analyzed in detail in this EIR would include a new bridge over the San Dieguito River that would be approximately the same length as the existing bridge and raised above the 100-year flood level. Most of the build alternatives would require removal of the existing bridge to provide room for the replacement bridge and would also include a cantilever equestrian trail. For the Eastern Alignment Alternative only, the existing bridge would be retained and vacated to the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for use as a non-vehicular trail facility. All of the build alternatives would involve grading the embankments under the new bridge to have 1.5:1 side slopes.

All of the build alternatives analyzed in detail in this EIR would include widening Via de la Valle to its ultimate width from the modified intersection with El Camino Real eastward to El Camino Real North. The drainage channel along the south edge of Via de la Valle would be relocated further south and enlarged to carry a 100-year flow from the upstream watershed. The corrugated metal pipe storm drain under Via de la Valle at El Camino Real North would be replaced with a concrete box.

Project impacts to wetlands due to any of the build alternatives would be mitigated by enhancement and creation of brackish marsh and riparian vegetation on the JPA property west of the affected portion of El Camino Real.

SIGNIFICANT UNMITIGATED IMPACTS:

Traffic/Circulation

The Road Capacity Alternative and the Bicycle Safety Alternative would result in significant and unmitigable traffic/circulation impacts for not improving LOS (both alternatives), creating additional hazards for pedestrians (both alternatives), creating additional hazards for bicyclists (Road Capacity Alternative), and interfering with access to publicly or privately owned land (Road Capacity Alternative).

Visual/Aesthetics

All build alternatives except the Eastern Alignment Alternative would result in significant and unmitigable visual/aesthetics impacts from blocking a view corridor and blocking a view of a public resource. The view blockage would be due to the fencing needed on the outside of the cantilever equestrian trail on the west side of the bridge.

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION OR ALTERNATIVES FOR SIGNIFICANT UNMITIGATED IMPACTS:

Traffic/Circulation

There are no mitigation measures available to mitigate the significant impacts to traffic/circulation that would result with the Road Capacity Alternative and the Bicycle Safety Alternative. However, these impacts could be avoided by selecting another alternative for the project.

In addition, the long-term operation of the Via de la Valle and El Camino Real intersection would be LOS E in the AM and PM peak for the Central Alignment, Western Alignment, and Lower Elevation alternatives. This impact would be mitigable by providing a dedicated right turn lane for eastbound traffic on Via de la Valle to turn onto

southbound El Camino Real. However, this measure is not being selected for this project in order to avoid land use impacts to Mary's Tack and Feed. The Eastern Alignment Alternative would not have this impact because a dedicated right-turn lane would be provided and long-term operation at the new intersection of El Camino Real and Via de la Valle/De la Valle Place would be LOS C and D in the AM and PM peak, respectively.

Visual/Aesthetics

There are no measures to mitigate for the impact of view blockage due to the cantilever fencing which would occur for all of the build alternatives except for the Eastern Alignment Alternative. This impact could be avoided by selecting the Eastern Alignment Alternative, which would retain the existing bridge for a non-vehicular trail facility and would not include the cantilever equestrian trail on the new bridge.

MITIGATION, MONITORING, AND REPORTING PROGRAM INCORPORATED INTO THE PROJECT (See attached draft EIR for a detailed description of mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the project):

Visual/Aesthetics

All build alternatives would have significant aesthetic impacts from degradation of visual character. These impacts would be mitigable to below a level of significance by utilizing a railing system designed to integrate the concrete barrier requirements of a K-rail with those commonly associated with a wood rail barrier and by preparing and implementing a revegetation plan. The Road Capacity and Bicycle Safety alternatives would have significant neighborhood character and development feature impacts due to the retaining walls that would exceed six feet in height. These impacts would be mitigable to below a level of significance by the use of colored and textured concrete or alternating split face block with integral color for the retaining wall and the use of vegetation placed in front of the wall.

Historical Resources

The records search and field reconnaissance surveys identified no significant historical resources within the project area. Based on the results of the surveys and records search, no unique resources as defined in Section 21083.2 of CEQA would be impacted with this project. However, because there is the possibility for buried resources, there is a potential for significant impacts. Mitigation measures including archaeological monitoring during construction would reduce potential impacts to historical resources to a level below significant.

Hydrology/Water Quality

Impacts in terms of changes to stream flow velocities were concluded to be significant because all of the build alternatives would slightly increase 100-year velocities in the river upstream (east) of the road and bridge. These changes in 100-year flood velocities are concluded to be substantial. To mitigate impacts associated with the increase of 100-year velocities in the river to above erosional levels, buried bank protection would be required along the northern bank of the river for 500 feet east of the new bridge.

All build alternatives would comply with the City of San Diego Water Quality Standards. However, impacts during construction were concluded to be significant for all build alternatives because additional Best Management Practices (BMPs) may be required by

the permitting agencies to protect clapper rail and their habitat upstream of the bridge. These impacts would be mitigated to below a level of significance by incorporating BMPs and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) into the project.

Paleontological Resouces

Impacts to fossils could occur during earthwork activities at the northern and southern ends of the project, such as removal of existing roadway and digging of trenches for widened drainage channels or relocated utilities. The impacts would be direct and short-term, as potential for damage to paleontological resources would only occur during project construction. Mitigation measures including paleontological monitoring during construction would reduce potential impacts to paleontological resources to a level below significant.

Biological Resources

The proposed project would result in impacts to sensitive wetland habitats which include riparian scrubs and coastal wetlands. Based on the acreages presented in the EIR, the Eastern Alignment Alternative would result in the greatest total impacts to sensitive wetlands. However, the Central Alignment and Lower Elevation alternatives would result in the greatest impact to potential clapper rail habitat. The Road Capacity and Bicycle Safety alternatives would result in the fewest impacts to sensitive wetlands and the smallest impact to potential clapper rail habitat.

Mitigation for wetland impacts would be accomplished by habitat creation on a parcel approximately 75 acres in size adjacent to the project area within the Coastal Overlay Zone. The proposed parcel owned by the San Dieguito River Park JPA is currently planted with tomatoes. Mitigation on this site would allow for the creation of light-footed clapper rail habitat adjacent to the area of habitat loss. Construction corridors would be returned to their pre-project conditions following project completion, thus providing 1:1 restoration. Nevertheless, impacts associated with temporary construction easements are considered direct, permanent impacts and would be mitigated as such due to the temporal disturbance associated with project construction. Consequently additional acreage would be provided as necessary to achieve 3:1 or 4:1 mitigation for riparian scrub or coastal wetland habitats, respectively, on the proposed mitigation site.

Mitigation for impacts to riparian scrub habitats would be accomplished through a combination of restoration, creation, and enhancement of habitats with similar ecological value. Mitigation for impacts to riparian scrub in the road and bridge construction corridor would be accomplished at a 3:1 ratio through 1:1 restoration in the river and 2:1 enhancement of degraded riparian habitat in the project vicinity. Impacts from the permanent footprint of the bridge and road would be accomplished at a 3:1 ratio through 1:1 creation and 2:1 enhancement of similar habitat. Mitigation for impacts to coastal wetland habitat not occupied by light-footed clapper rail impacted along the road alignment and the road construction corridor could be mitigated at a 4:1 ratio through 1:1 creation and 3:1 enhancement of similar habitat. However, no sites for potential enhancement of coastal wetland habitat were found in the immediate project vicinity. Therefore, it is proposed to mitigate impacts to coastal wetlands not occupied by light-foot clapper rail at a 4:1 ratio through creation of similar habitat and out of kind creation of riparian scrub habitat at the proposed mitigation site.

The proposed project also would result in impacts to disturbed Diegan coastal sage scrub. Based on the acreages presented in the EIR, the Central Alignment and Lower Elevation

alternatives would result in the greatest impacts to sensitive upland habitat. The Eastern Alignment Alternative would result in the fewest impacts to sensitive upland habitat.

Potentially significant indirect impacts to sensitive species (light-footed clapper rail, least Bell's vireo, northern harrier, white-faced ibis, yellow warbler) would be mitigated by prohibiting construction in the river corridor during the breeding season (February 15 through September15).

NO MITIGATION OR ALTERNATIVES REQUIRED:

After analysis, impacts in the following issue areas were found to be not significant under CEQA for all of the build alternatives: Land Use, Farmlands/Agricultural Lands, Public Utilities/Services, Geology/Seismicity/Soils, Air Quality, and Noise.

Robert J. Manis
Assistant Deputy Director
Development Services Department

July 25, 2006
Date of Draft Report

Date of Final Report

Analyst: Clark

DISTRIBUTION:

The following individuals, organizations, and agencies received a copy or notice of the draft EIR and were invited to comment on its accuracy and sufficiency:

U.S. Government
- Department of Transportation (2)
- Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (23)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Department of Agriculture (25)

State of California
- Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 11 (31)
- Department of Fish & Game (32)
- Department of Food & Agriculture (34)
- Department of Parks & Recreation (40)
- Office of Historic Preservation (41)
- Resources Agency (43)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 9 (44)
- California Coastal Commission (47, 48)
- Native American Heritage (56)
- 22nd District Agricultural Association (411)

County of San Diego
- County Agricultural Department (64)
- County Department of Planning and Land Use (68)

County Department of Public Works (70, 72)

City of San Diego
- Councilmember Peters, District 1
- Development Services Department
- Library Department (81)
- Carmel Valley Branch Library (81F)
- Real Estate Assets Department (85)
- Secretary to the Historical Resources Board (87)
- Wetlands Advisory Board (91A)
- General Services (92)

Other Cities
- City of Del Mar (96)
- City Attorney of Del Mar (346)
- City of Solana Beach (105)

Other Agencies, Organizations and Individuals
- Gary Hess (352)
- San Diego Transit Corporation (112)
- San Diego Gas & Electric (114)
- Metropolitan Transit Development Board (115)
- San Dieguito River Joint Powers Association (116)
- Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden at Claremont (161)
- Environmental Law Society (164)
- Sierra Club (165)
- San Diego Natural History Museum (166)
- San Diego Audubon Society (167)
- California Native Plant Society (170)
- Stuart Hurlbert (172)
- Center for Biological Diversity (176)
- Citizens Coordinate for Century III (179)
- Endangered Habitats League (182)
- Jerry Schaefer, PhD (209)
- South Coastal Information Center (210)
- San Diego Historical Society (211)
- San Diego Archaeological Society (212)
- Save Our Heritage Organisation (214)
- Ron Christman (215)
- Louie Guassac (215A)
- San Diego County Archaeological Society (218)
- National Trust for Historical Preservation (219)
- Native American Heritage Commission (222)
- Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee (225)
- Pardee Construction Company (345)
- Brian Biamonte (348)
- Carmel Valley Community Planning Board (350)
- Carmel Mountain Conservancy (184)
- San Dieguito Lagoon Committee (409)
- San Dieguito Planning Group (412)
- San Dieguito River Park (415)
- Friends of San Dieguito River Valley (419, 421)
- San Dieguito River Valley and Conservancy (422)
- RVR PARC (423)

Fairbanks Ranch Association (424)
San Dieguito River Park (425A)
Torrey Pines Community Planning Group (469)
RB General, LLC
M. L. Mosley
San Diego Polo Club
Seltzer, Caplan, Wilkins, and McMahon
Hany Elwany
Samir Tanious
R. M. & E. A. Gain
Plaza Partners
All Creatures Investment Partners
R. H. & A. T. Speck
Bourdreau Trust of 1990
Donald T. & Mary L. Meagher
Jacqueline Winterer
Anne Harvey
Marvin Gerst
Vicki Touchstone
Jan Fuchs
Richard Manning
Donald Worley
George Saddic
Lucy Ann Albert
Professor T. C. Hu
Mitch Berner
Doug Paul
Susan Carter, San Dieguito River Park, JPA
Ladeki Restaurant Group
Ryan Litritch

* Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians (225A)
* Campo Band of Mission Indians (225B)
* Ewiiaapaayp Band of Mission Indians (225C)
* Inaja and Cosmit Band of Mission Indians (225D)
* Jamul Band of Mission Indians (225E)
* La Posta Band of Mission Indians (225F)
* Manzanita Band of Mission Indians (225G)
* Sycuan Band of Mission Indians (225H)
* Viejas Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians (225I)
* Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians (225J)
* San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians (225K)
* Santa Ysabel Band of Diegueno Indians (225L)
* La Jolla Band of Mission Indians (225M)
* Pala Band of Mission Indians (225N)
* Pauma Band of Mission Indians (225O)
* Pechanga Band of Mission Indians (225P)
* Los Coyotes Band of Mission Indians (225R)

* Public Notice only.

VII. Results of Public Review:

( ) No comments were received during the public input period.

( ) Comments were received but did not address the accuracy or completeness of the environmental report. No response is necessary and the letters are attached at the end of the EIR.

( ) Comments addressing the accuracy or completeness of the EIR were received during the public input period. The letters and responses follow.

Copies of the draft EIR, the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program, and any technical appendices may be reviewed in the office of the Land Development Review Division, or purchased for the cost of reproduction.